

Testimony in support of H.B. No. 6932 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING PAID  
FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE

My name is Susan Gignac. I worked for 16 years at Cigna until my position was eliminated. I found a job at UCONN Medical School and worked there for another 15 years. In 2009, I was working in a neuroscience research lab when my mother became seriously ill suffering severe complications from the anesthesia used during routine hernia surgery. She was in critical condition for approximately five weeks.

The stress of caring for my mother affected my productivity at work. While UCONN did have a family and medical leave policy, the stress of caring and worrying about my mother so disoriented me that I lost focus. My supervisors discussed my annual performance review with me on April 30; the day it needed to be signed however did not mention the family and medical leave available to me. In my weakened condition, I chose to take early retirement when it was offered a month later; thus accepting a much lower pension so I could take care of my mother.

That pension from UCONN ran out after three and a half years. I lost my apartment and lived in five shelters for the next 15 months. Just recently I found a subsidized apartment. Until I can find a job at age 62, I live off the small pension I receive from Cigna: 465 dollars each month. Someone who worked for 31 years should have more security than I do. I would have more security if I hadn't felt forced into early retirement rather than have extended family leave provided to me.

The fact that UCONN had a family medical leave policy in place and my supervisors, via their work demands, pushed me toward early retirement does not make a law like this unnecessary. Mine is a story of the person who has no medical leave at all. People who don't have that safety net to catch them when a relative is sick can be plunged into homelessness. I am living proof that a lack of family medical leave can be disastrous for someone. The fund established by this law can be the difference between someone living their dreams or living on the streets. I urge you to pass this legislation so other women do not experience the same losses as I did.

Susan Gignac  
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